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Greece

“Popular Unity” is born

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Early this morning, 25 Syriza MPs left the parliamentary group of the party to create a new group under the name of “Popular Unity”. Most of these MPs are affiliated to the Left Platform, but some others also joined like Vangelis Diamantopoulos or Rachel Makri, a close collaborator of Zoe Kostantopoulou. [1]

This is a major development in Greek politics but also for the radical Left, in Greece and at an international level.

Three elements need to be emphasized.

The first is that “Popular Unity” is the name of the new political front, which will regroup thirteen organizations of the radical Left, those who signed the [text issued on August 13](#) calling for the constitution of the Front of the No.

This front is therefore the first tangible result of a recomposition within the Greek radical Left. A recomposition that draws the lessons of the last five years and of course of the experience of Syriza in office and of the resulting catastrophe. But the goal of the front is even broader than this, it is to provide an expression to social forces that do not necessarily recognize themselves as part of the Left but want to fight austerity, the Memoranda and the "Troika rule reloaded" of the new Memorandum.

The second is that the goal of the front is to constitute the political expression of the No as was expressed both in the January elections and in the referendum of July 5. The main programmatic lines are the rupture with austerity and the memoranda, the rejection of all privatizations and the nationalization under social control of strategic sectors of the economy, starting with the banking system, the cancellation of the major part of the Greek debt (starting with the immediate interruption of its repayment) and, more broadly a set of radical measures that will shift the balance of forces in favour of labour and of the popular classes and open up a path for the progressive reconstruction of the country, of its economy and of its institutions.

These goals cannot be realized without exiting the Eurozone as the recent disaster has abundantly demonstrated and without breaking with the whole set of policies institutionalized by the EU. [2]. The front will also struggle for a unitary internationalist struggle around common objectives at the European and international level and will support exiting NATO, breaking the existing agreements between Greece and Israel and radically opposing imperialist wars and interventions. This transitional programme is situated in the perspective of a socialism of the 21st century.

The third is that this new parliamentary group is now the third in terms of its size in the Greek Parliament, ahead of Golden Dawn, the neonazi party. This means that in the next few days its leader, Panagiotis Lafazanis, will get a mandate to constitute a government that will last for three days, as the Greek constitution stipulates.

After the resignation of the Tsipras government this mandate is now in the hands of the second party in Parliament, New Democracy, the main rightwing opposition party. This span of time will be used by Popular Unity to trigger a broad debate and the mobilization of all the social forces who wish to fight austerity and the Memoranda, the previous as well as the new one.

The programme of the party and the full range of its support among leading personalities of the Greek Left, which is expected to be quite impressive, will be released at the start of next week.

Athens, August 21 2015

[1] The 25 members of parliament are: Panagiotis Lafazanis, Stathis Leoutsakos, Kostas Isichos, Rachel Makri, Kostas Lapavitsas, Dimitris Stratoulis, Evgenia Ouzounidou, Thanasis Petrakos, Stefanos Samoilis, Athanasios Skoumas, Yannis Stathas, Alexandra Tsanaka, Despina Charalambidou, Eleni Psarea, Thomas Kotsias, Aglaia Kyritsi, Vasilis Kyriakakis, Michalis Kritsotakis, Ioanna Gaitani, Litsa Amanatidou, Yannis Zerdelis, Kostas Delimitros, Ilias Ioannidis, Zisis Zannas and Vangelis Diamantopoulos. There is speculation in the Greek press that a further four will join them.

[2] During the press conference organized on 21 August, Panagiotis Lafazanis, former Energy Minister in the Tsipras government, explained that if it were necessary to leave the Eurozone to cancel the memorandum they would do so, adding tht such an exit would be “prepared”.